

## Meeting Notes

### LGBTQ Steering Committee Meeting

January 25, 2011

5:30-7 p.m.

DCPS Central Office

### Overview:

DCPS is developing a comprehensive plan for supporting the DCPS Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) community of students, staff and families. A newly formed LGBTQ Steering Committee of students, school administration and staff, parents and community experts will guide DCPS in the development and implementation of the plan. This was the first meeting of the LGBTQ Steering Committee.

**Attendance:** two DCPS students, two DCPS parents, three national and community experts, four U.S. Department of Education representatives, six school-based staff, nine DCPS Central Office staff

### Notes:

Issue	Comments
Purpose, goals and expectations	This steering committee has been convened by the Office of Youth Engagement in the DCPS Central Office. There are two goals to this meeting: to review recommendations from past “listening sessions” and anecdotal data and to begin planning how to create a welcoming and respectful community for LGBTQ students, staff and families in every school. Face-to-face meetings will be held monthly, and there will be opportunities to provide additional feedback on the committee’s work in between meetings via email.
Review of listening session and other data	Data were gathered through: a listening session with DCPS administrators, students, teachers, social workers, other school based staff, and central office staff; a listening session with LGBTQ parents; and feedback from school-based staff through sexual health, capacity building activities. Based on this research, we found that most schools have a culture of tolerance, and many adults and students in our school building are open and affirming. However, there are several key areas for improvement: <b>Improving Skills and Knowledge of School-based Staff:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• bullying needs to be addressed</li><li>• staff should be consistent in modeling appropriate and tolerant behavior, with both staff and students</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• administrators should support student empowerment and awareness-building programming</li> <li>• trainings needed for staff and administrators on appropriate and inclusive language</li> <li>• need simple and clear interpretations of the policies to share with the school community</li> <li>• vital to gain the support and investment of administrators</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoting Positive School Culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing information and resources within and between schools is essential</li> <li>• important to reach and empower students creatively for advice and support</li> <li>• implement programming that focuses specifically on expanding cultural competence</li> <li>• curbing offensive, disparaging and intolerant language in the hallways and in the classrooms by both students and staff</li> <li>• adequately training staff to address behaviors and support open dialogue in the classroom in a developmentally-appropriate way</li> <li>• encourage students to monitor their peers’ speech, and model that behavior in all situations</li> <li>• visual clues and reminders of LGBTQ acceptance are also important</li> <li>• prominently posting information on LGBTQ historical events, leaders, media, and celebration days</li> </ul> <p><b>Creating an Inclusive Work Environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBTQ staff are often not comfortable being “out” in schools</li> <li>• gender role issues are often not addressed</li> <li>• disparaging remarks sometimes made about LGBTQ staff or families</li> <li>• Important to have culturally competent and inclusive books, places, and materials are to making the built environment safer-even something as simple as designating a unisex bathroom-in tandem with proper awareness and education-may help</li> </ul> <p><b>Welcoming All Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school community needs to know the resources that are available</li> <li>• families feel welcome when schools are mindful of their language, when schools are intentional about their diversity, when participation in the classroom is welcomed publically, when curricula include representing LGBTQ families, when the library and classrooms have inclusive materials</li> <li>• family engagement is very important as students listen to their families, emulate their parents</li> </ul> <p><b>Linking Schools and Communities:</b></p>
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• build awareness of within school community of appropriate resources and foster those relationships</li> <li>• staff need to know how and where to make appropriate referrals</li> <li>• important to allow for information sharing among school staff to share successes and challenges</li> </ul>
Gallery Walk	<p>For each subtopic, steering committee members worked in pairs to indicate what exists and what we need to build:</p> <p><b><u>Improving Skills and Knowledge of School-Based Staff</u></b></p> <p><i>Principal/Leadership engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: role models; inclusive principals need to be role models for their peers</li> <li>• What do we need to build: mindset where diversity is a strength; not a “challenge”; measuring/accountability; surveys of school community (anonymous); principal needs to include all voices—especially those not coming forward; having parents willing to speak out/push empowering parents!; principal trainings and seminars</li> </ul> <p><i>Staff development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: professional development for social workers on preventing LGBTQ suicide; SMYAL provides LGBTQ youth culture competency training; GLSEN has resources for GSA advisors; all staff at school should be trained on transgender association at a high school; Deal MS invited PFLAG, OYE, and SIECUS to run workshops for staff</li> <li>• What do we need to build: resource guide and publicity; a hiring process where potential new staff are assessed on gender and sex diversity as well as made clear of DCPS expectations; a single mission we can all agree upon (safety); opportunities for staff to immerse themselves into different mindsets—opportunities for growth and self-reflection; more opportunities for staff to receive training on all aspects of LGBTQ youth issues; a cross-school diversity panel</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Promoting Positive School Culture</u></b></p> <p><i>Safe; welcoming and inclusive environment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: LGBTQ History Month (at all grade levels?); GSAs in some schools; knowledgeable, supportive, affirming staff</li> <li>• What do we need to build: classroom lessons on civility; infuse LGBTQ issues and people throughout the curriculum; forums and information sessions regarding LGBTQ issues; programs like GSAs; staff training;</li> </ul>

	<p>supportive parent groups need to be sustainable; system-wide training of staff and students; guidelines that are <u>followed</u>; dedicated and known staff to go to on LGBTQ issues</p> <p><i>Youth Development (GSAs; etc.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: some schools have GSAs; staff members who are available (informally) for conversations; schools are asking students about LGBTQ topics/issues</li> <li>• What do we need to build: variant gender expressions need to be protected; organize a venue to make known where students can go; organize team to go into schools to help set-up GSAs; more data collection on self-identification is needed</li> </ul> <p><i>Access to Resources and Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: national and local organizations; transportation assistance; school uniforms; and other supports for homeless students; social workers and counselors</li> <li>• What do we need to build: teachers need training on gender stereotyping at all grade levels; resource guide (on bulletin boards; on website; on portals); hand out cards with web addresses; advertise more!; who are the go to people in the schools?; safe space education for students through PE; students who need additional services not available at school need to be connected to a knowledgeable adult who can connect them to those resources; LGBTQ issues need to be part of whole curriculum (health; social studies); trainings in schools of students, staff, administrators, health teachers, nurses</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Creating an Inclusive Work Environment</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: non-discrimination policy; gay marriage; out and equal</li> <li>• What do we need to build: platform for the transference of testimonials to students and fellow staff to build community relations (staff success stories on their matriculation form secondary education to a professional career); supportive and respectful culture among adults and students</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Welcoming All Families</u></b></p> <p><i>Promotion and Inclusion of LGBTQ issues in general family engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: family workshops-“advertise” these meetings</li> <li>• What do we need to build: needs to be institutionalized-all ad hoc currently; staff training around family engagement</li> </ul>
--	---

	<p><i>Supporting Families of LGBTQ students</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: family engagement coordinators; staff training all linked back to family engagement; Family Acceptance Project research and curricula; impact CSC</li> <li>• What do we need to build: raise awareness of family engagement coordinators and services; consider implementation of FAP curricula and dissemination to parents and teachers</li> </ul> <p><i>Supporting LGBTQ-headed families</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: appropriate forms; IMPACT CSC; school-by-school strengths; parent resource centers through DCPS</li> <li>• What do we need to build: not much exists system-wide; welcoming environments for LGBTQ families; specific events/outreach; school forms and paperwork to reflect all kind of families; raise awareness among families and staff; culture shift so principals etc. recognize all families</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Linking Schools and Communities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exists: SMYAL; Trevor Project; PFLAG; Rainbow Families; Transgender Health Empowerment; DC Center; Us Helping Us; GLSEN; Children’s Hospital (Dr. Menviele’s program); DC Concerned Prov. Coalition; LAYC (Mpoderate); Point Foundation; La Clinica del Pueblo; HRC; Welcoming Schools Curriculum; Family Acceptance Project</li> <li>• What do we need to build: focus groups; making connections; point person at each school; putting these resources/links into the website; working with community resources to create opportunities for students to learn about services available (i.e. informal lunch info sessions); relationships with appropriate staff at each school; create awareness of these resources (i.e. list/school wide) that each school has (health fairs, etc.)</li> </ul>
Subcommittee Breakout	<p>Committee members broke into subcommittees aligned with each key area of work, and began to draft action plans for each area, indicating what actions should be taken, who should do them, and by when. Committee members used the gallery walk notes as initial guidance.</p>

---

---

Next Steps	Next meeting of LGBTQ Steering Committee is <b>Wednesday February 23 at 5:30pm</b> . Participation on the Steering Committee will require a monthly meeting commitment in the coming months to develop the plan, and a quarterly meeting commitment after that to monitor implementation. Additional feedback in between meetings can be provided via email, sent to <a href="mailto:andrea.desantis@dc.gov">andrea.desantis@dc.gov</a> . For more information contact Andrea DeSantis, Risk Reduction Coordinator at <a href="mailto:andrea.desantis@dc.gov">andrea.desantis@dc.gov</a> , 202.442.5040.
------------	--